

The Black Student Union's

Perspective

November 1995



For My People.

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I say, the night has been long,
The wound has been deep,
The pit has been dark
And the walls have been steep.

But today, voices of old spirit sound
Speak to us in words profound,
Across the years, across the centuries,
Across the oceans, and across the seas.
They say, draw near to one another.

Save your race.

You have been paid for in a distant place,
The old ones remind us that slavery's chain.
Have paid our freedom again and again.

The hells we have lived through and live through still,
Have sharpened our senses and toughened our will.

The night has been long.

This morning I look through your anguish
Right down to your soul.

I know that with each other we can make ourselves whole.

I say, clap hands and let's come together in this meeting ground,
I say, clap hands and let us get from the low road of indifference,
Clap hands, let us come together and reveal our hearts,
Let us come together and revise our spirits,
Let us come together and cleanse our souls...
Clap hands, call the spirits back from the ledge,
Clap hands, let us invite joy into our conversation,
Courtesy into our bedrooms,
Gentleness into our kitchen,
Care into our nursery.

The ancestors remind us, despite the history of pain.
We are a going- on people who will rise again.

And still we rise.

These excerpts are from the poem Maya Angelou delivered at the Million Man March. Courtesy of Amira F. Canty.

President's Corner

"Learn or Die"

by Charles Sydnor III

I hold unto myself the belief that an understanding of history breeds a better understanding of present reality. There is no way to tuck away or sever present reality's umbilical cord to the past without maliciously leaving a dark void which must be filled. I hold a position in an organization, which like many other predominantly black organizations, tries to keep a stronger and more powerful entity true to itself. The N.A.A.C.P., C.O.R.E., N.O.I., S.N.C.C., S.C.L.C., Black Panthers, Urban League, and many other so-called "special interest" organizations have attempted in the past, and are still attempting to hold America true to its promises of freedom and equality. We student groups on campus must also do our part, as our forefathers have done to hold the existing power structure accountable.

In the past, many black organizations were not able to recognize their common thread. They didn't realize the importance of working together to achieve similar goals. Instead, black groups routinely fought amongst themselves, and eventually most were disbanded or dissolved from the inside out. Well...some of us have learned a great lesson from the mistakes of our forefathers. We have taken heed of some of the pitfalls which had swallowed them.

The old adage, "United we stand, divided we

fall" carries a weight that is still pertinent today. However, realization is not without demonstration. An idea is nothing more than that until someone takes the initiative to bring the idea to fruition. That is why we students with similar interests and goals need to come together. This initiative is our bond and our unifying force.

I leave you with these natural occurrences of power in unity to ponder. An infinite number of water droplets, snowflakes or sand when united are devastating to whatever force which defies them. Unity is both powerful and comforting in times of trouble.

For those of you who may decide that the student organizations on campus are not for you, but still want to create pathways for positive change, persistence is key. I promise you it may take years of persistence and frustration, but just as the continuous flow of individual water droplets and sand grains can transform objects as hard as boulders into pebbles, so can you.

So learn from any and everything: past and present. For all knowledge is precious if we are ever to truly understand life.

Octavia Butler- "Your teachers are all around you. All that you perceive. All that you experience. All that is given to you or taken from you. All that you love or hate, need or fear will teach you- If you learn. God is your first and last teacher. God's your hardest teacher: subtle, demanding. **Learn or die.**" (Parable of the Sower, p.251)

Treasury Notes

by Steve Haynes

Hey everyone! This is Steve coming at you with Treasurer News. I'm pleased to announce the kickoff of this years major fundraiser--the Bahamas Vacation Giveaway! Tickets went on sale Friday, October 20th at \$2.00 a pop. To sum things up a bit, one lucky person will win a trip for two to the Bahamas!

The drawing, set to be held May 5, 1996, will also make at least three other people very happy, because there are consolation prizes as well: 1st prize is a \$50.00 gift certificate to the Bookstore, 2nd prize is a nifty J.H.U. Mug and 3rd prize is a free B.S.U. Tee-Shirt. Most exciting of all is the prize that goes to the hardworking individual who garners the highest volume of ticket sales. Although I won't tell you what it is just yet, I will say that it's valued at \$150.00.

So just keep all this good stuff in mind and remember that we can only be successful with your support. By the next B.S.U. meeting, I'll have a schedule for people to sign up for a shift to sell tickets at Terrace, Wolman and Gilman during the week.

If you think there's a lot of exciting stuff ahead you're right... If you feel that everyone can be a winner... you're right again. Wanna try for three out of three? Keep an eye out for more details on the B.S.U. Bahamas Vacation Getaway.

Upcoming Black Student Union Events:

November 30, 1995- B.S.U. Night

1) J.H.U. African-American Troupe presents,
"We're Gonna Have a Good Time."

Place: Merrick Barn

Time: 8 p.m.

Price: \$10 Public,
\$5 Students.

Later on that evening...

2) The Black Student Union presents music from,
Experience Unlimited (E.U.)

"Doin" the Butt!"

Place: Great Hall

Time: 10 p.m.- 2 a.m.

Price: Free if you go to the play
and \$2 if you don't.

The Interview with the Dean of Arts & Sciences, Steven Knapp

Transcribed by Najla Rushdan and her sister-in-law.

Perspective- Are you committed to the installation of an African Department at Johns Hopkins University?

Dean Knapp- We have had a lot of discussion about setting up a department in various ethnic studies. At the University of California at Berkeley, where I taught before I came to Hopkins there was a department of ethnic studies, an Asian-American Studies Department, a Native American Studies and Latin American Studies Department.

At that time, there was a lot of getting together with those departments. The sense of having a separate department for each particular ethnic group was not working as effectively as planned. There were numerous faculty members coming from these departments and moving into my department, which was the English Department. The idea at Berkeley was to reform the various curriculum with in those traditional disciplines, rather than have a separate curriculum. Hopkins in comparison to Berkeley is very small. Hopkins only has 250 faculty in

the 25 departments.

At Hopkins, the question of installing a Black Studies Department came up before and was answered by President Richardson. He suggested that we add faculty with interest in African-American literature, society, culture and history to various departments and create an interdisciplinary program which would be an alternative to the traditional model of a single department. There was a committee of faculty which at that time was called the "Poovey committee" that made the recommendation for creating a comparative major which we went ahead with last year and formed what is called Comparative American Cultures. In this major we incorporate various kinds of American ethnic and racial groups.

What it seems, from my point of view is that both faculty and students were interested last year in creating a major that would incorporate the various groups that make up America. The next step would be to create some minors for people who would have a track coming out of comparative cultures. We also had a faculty that would be interested in serving intellectually in the project of setting up a program for Asian, Hispanics and African-American groups. We were more interested in the comparative perspective approach and the interaction among

groups, as a way of handling the scale of such an activity at Hopkins.

We have now added a number of African American faculty to the campus; Professor Reid-Farr in English, Professor Bennett in History, Professor McDonald in Sociology, and a professor in Political Science. They are all participating in this new major.

Perspective- Why has the university installed an East Asian Studies program and Women Studies Department, but not an African Studies Department or major?

Dean Knapp- Some people think this is about Asian American ethnic studies, this is in fact a regional overseas program. We have about 300 international relations majors and a lot of them are interested in Asia. They are interested in government, business, language and diplomacy connected with Asian countries meaning China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan. These are students who are interested in international relations, so it is a very different kind of thing.

It's not about the immigrant experience or the History of slavery or the kinds of things that are covered in the Comparative American Cultures program. It's not about Asian Immigration, it's about Asian nations and it is aimed at people who want to have a career overseas. So that's one of the things the faculty focused on.

This does not mean that when we were talking about African-American studies we were not talking about Africa, because in order to

understand African American experience, you have to understand Africa. You have to understand the history of migration from Africa, and the history of slavery. But the question is, what is the focus in the Comparative American Cultures? If you took an African-American Studies Department at an institution like Berkeley, the focus there is not on the history of Africa, but on the history of the African Americans in the United States. Also a lot of attention is on the Caribbean, because that's part of the of the whole history of slavery and everything that came out of that history.

We do not have an Asian American studies department any more than we have an African American studies department. What we have is an interdisciplinary major, where we take courses that are in a whole bunch of different departments and put them together, which is the same thing we did with the Comparative American Cultures Program. As we add more faculty in these areas we can develop minors and majors that are responsive to student's interests.

However, you can have a major or you can have a minor without having the separate departments. Women's Studies does not have a major, they have a minor. There is not as much of an academic program in Women's Studies as there is in Comparative American Cultures. Latin American studies has a major rather than a minor. Global studies has a minor rather than a major and what this reflects is what the faculty is prepared to offer and what they think they can cover. So all these things come out of faculty and student discussions...

"As an African-American, I have an interest in learning my history, and what it means to be black in the world today. If someone was to say that Black Studies has no place in academia, they would be saying that my history and place in the world was not important enough to learn, to know, or be given individual attention. That is the kind of attitude I would expect from J.H.U., however closed-minded, racially suppressive and neglectful."- Anonymous (Response to the B.S.U. survey)

The Case for the Installment of a Black Studies Department.

by Patrique Campbell

"Without 'struggle' there is no progress."

As I begin to write this article about the history of the "struggle" of the black students at the Johns Hopkins University in bringing a Black Studies Department to campus, I can't help but pose to you, and my own self, some basic questions. Firstly, why do we need a Black Studies Department? Obviously, the next question is why don't we have a Black Studies Department at Hopkins? Lastly, what do the answers to these two preceding questions mean?

In addressing these questions, I must make it perfectly clear to the Hopkins community that this is the voice of Patrique Campbell, one student at Hopkins with one mind. Too often, people choose to generalize the beliefs of an individual with that of an entire race.

Now, there are classes at this university that deal with African History, African-American

History or Histories, and there are also courses pertaining to the presence of blacks in various parts of the world, such as the Caribbean or Latin America. There is 'even' a Comparative American Cultures program at this school. By emphasizing the word 'even,' I am in no way alluding to the position that this program is insufficient or irrelevant in the mission of learning about race, culture and identity. However, this program is in no way, shape or form, a "replacement" for a Black Studies Department, as Provost Cooper in his recent interview with the Perspective stated.

In that interview Provost Cooper asked the students who were present, why we were so intent on getting a Black Studies Department? In reply, we turned the question around and asked the Provost why was this university so stubborn and unwilling to bring a Black Studies department here? Neither Provost Cooper or Dean Knapp (the soon to be Provost) could give us a clear answer.

The issues concerning this topic are nothing new. Just a few years ago, a list of grievances from black students at Hopkins were presented

to the administration. At the top of the list was the issue of installing a Black Studies Department. Kobi Little, former President of the Black Student Union and the Hopkins N.A.A.C.P. asserts that at the time the university told the black student leaders on campus that a Black Studies Department wasn't feasible because no one would be willing to fund it. He declared "Why wouldn't anyone fund it? Because they're racist." According to Little, the fact that 'no one would be willing to fund a Black Studies Department' only signified a deeper racism.

A discussion with Henry Boatang, former President of the Black Student Union and current graduate student at the School of Health and Hygiene revealed that, the issue of a Black Studies department was sent to committees which outlived the stay of all of the student leaders at the time. Even though, on May 18, 1993 the Committee on Black, Ethnic and Multicultural Studies reported to Dean Armstrong, the then Dean of Arts and Sciences that, "We recommend the establishment of a program in Africa and African Diaspora Studies. Like the existing programs in Women's Studies and Latin American Studies." The university was still able to bottle up the concerns of its black students, until the students graduated and the university was able to find a committee report to their liking.

Now, it's 1995 and there is still no Black Studies Department. Since the initial attempt was made for the installation of a Black Studies Department and more black professors over 25 years ago, all we have to show for it is a handful of black professors, a few classes, and various programs which signify the universities continued effort to pacify us.

When the Dean of Arts and Sciences, Steven Knapp was asked about why the university was so unwilling to install a Black Studies Department, he argued that the faculty would not be interested. If this institution calls itself a university, should not student input be just as, if not even more valuable than faculty input? Based on the recent survey shown in this edition of the Perspective, it is apparent that approximately 40% of the students polled believe the presence of a Black Studies Department would affect their decision in choosing a major or minor. By refusing to implement a Black Studies Department, this school ignores the wishes of an important segment of its student population.

Dean Knapp, also argued that he did not believe that the university could establish a Black Studies Department. In his interview with the Perspective the Dean explained, "No, we did not feel we could establish various departments in this area, for two reasons. First, we are unable to hire a separate faculty for each department

that would be able to give a serious and responsible program, because you don't want to start a program that is not going to survive." However, in about two years the university was able to start an East Asian Regional Studies program from the ground up. As late as May 18, 1993, William Roe of the History Department was the only Asian specialist on the faculty at Homewood. How is it that in less than two years the university has been able to, as Dean Knapp asserts create a 'serious and responsible' program in East Asian Regional Studies and not in African Studies? Something here doesn't make much sense.

Instead, the university has created a Comparative American Cultures Program based on the recommendations of the Academic Diversity committee reports of March 3, 1994. This program gives, as stated in the committee report an "in-depth specialization and a broadly comparative perspective" on race and culture; not on Africans and those of African descent. Even Provost Cooper himself called the course description in this Comparative American Cultures Program as very general. According to the March 3, 1994 committee report, this program focuses on the "comparative cultural studies with specialization in the African Diaspora, Asia and Asian Immigration, and Latin America and Latin American Immigration." Although, Hopkins offers

alternative majors in Latin American Studies and East Asian Studies, those who want to major in African and/or Black Studies cannot.

The many dynamic and diverse accounts of the history of peoples of African descent cannot be covered in a program, or a minor, or a couple of classes thrown here and there. As it stands, most American students know only portions of the histories of peoples of African descent. This is criminal. I believe that it is incumbent that all students know the histories of people of African descent everywhere. To have an institution of the caliber of Johns Hopkins, refuse to implement a Black Studies department is indicative of a lack of honest commitment and dedication to educating not only its black students, but its white ones as well.

As Henry Boatang, suggests "It has become more obvious over the past two months that America has no idea about race relations...the O.J. Simpson Trial...The Million Man March. Hopkins as one of the premiere educational institutions can't continue to produce ignorant people because society will become even more racially polar." The ignorance that Henry is inferring to in this quote, can quite easily be found in each week's edition of the Standard, or the Newsletter. I can clearly remember when I saw a campaign poster of Joey Crawford, President of the Freshman class of 1994 defaced with the word nigger written on it. I can also

clearly recall someone telling me about a white student who drew a Swastika over a picture of Martin Luther King Jr. There are many more examples of racism that I myself have witnessed during my short stay at Hopkins, that I never experienced before I came here.

A Black Studies Department at Hopkins will not get rid of racism over night, or over the next few years. However, a Black Studies Department that is carefully structured to educate about the histories of Africans on the mother continent, in the Americas, and elsewhere can start to open the minds of the closed minded at Hopkins. A Black Studies Department can incorporate the political, social, economical, and cultural dynamics of blacks everywhere.

As Dawit Habte states, "Students at Hopkins have no clue about Black History...some of the best in the nation know nothing about the history of a people." Without ample reference to the history of Africa and its peoples, how can the history books ever truly be complete? On that note, how can a university ever truly be what it stands for (a place to learn the whole truth), without the presence of a Black Studies Department? A few classes in African History and other courses here and there simply won't suffice.

In the interview with the Perspective, Provost Cooper stated that creating Black Studies

Departments "is no longer in vogue." This disturbs me greatly. If Black Studies departments are at one moment in vogue and the next moment not, I wonder whether African history itself might one day be looked at in the same way. When is education ever out of vogue, or obsolete? The reason behind studying the history of a people is not because it is in vogue, but because it is a means by which society can learn more. It is for this reason, as Najla Rushdan suggests "Black Studies departments are worth their weight in gold." Never let anyone ever tell you otherwise.

In order to hold this university accountable to its promises of more black professors and a Black Studies Department a committee entitled, **Concerned Students** has been formed. This committee will meet on *Friday at 8 p.m., December 1, 1995 in the B.S.U. Room.*

Running

by Letha Francis

The encouraging cheer of the crowd gradually
died quickly replaced by the rise of deep moans,
heavy breathing, chanting.

Like a misplaced infantry training for battle each
broken soldier trampled through open fields, streams, woods.

Perspiration layered darkened skin, stung tired eyes,
slid like saliva down each face, neck, thigh.

Between them words no longer existed, were
unnecessary in the humid July air where their soul
seemed to communicate course messages of the
distance traveled, the distance ahead.

Though ignorant of the fact,
these weakened warriors had been racing for hours.

Now, exhausted their synchronized rhythm
transformed into the steady drone of a medieval
dirge drummed into the hard dirt beneath their feet.

An unreadable sound from above an approaching hill suddenly
broke the band's hopeful rhythm.

As soon as they were aware of their desperate situation the once solidly linked chain

disintegrated

The hounds reached them first
devouring limbs, pouncing, tearing,
ripping into flesh, exposing human organs.

Then came the men with guns
reports were they fired once...twice then continuously until
Death silenced all signs of life

The race lost.

Songs of freedom faded swiftly away.

Survey of 52 Black Undergraduates at Johns Hopkins University

Freshman: 15% Sophomore: 37% Junior: 23% Senior: 25%

1. Do you think that there is a pressing need for a Black Studies Department on campus?

Yes: 83% No: 13% N/A: 4%

2. Do you think that there is a need for more black professors on campus? Yes: 96% No: 4% N/A:

3. Have you ever taken a course related to the field of Black Studies while at Hopkins?

Yes: 38% No: 61% N/A: 1%

4. If there were more black professors teaching courses related to the field of Black Studies would you be more willing to major, minor or take a course in the field of Black Studies?

Yes: 69% No: 25% N/A: 6%

5. Do you think the administration has done enough to encourage black professors to come?

Yes: 4% No: 75% N/A: 21%

6. During your stay at Hopkins, have you ever been taught by a black professor?

Yes: 21% No: 77% N/A: 2%

7. Would you like to be taught by a Black professor before you graduate?

Yes: 88% No: 2% N/A: 10%

8. Compared to Harvard, Princeton and Yale would you consider the administration's policy concerning the installation of a Black Studies Department and the employment of more Black faculty to be slow moving? Yes: 67% No: 2% N/A: 31%

"Johns Hopkins University supports Professor Gordon, not the mental evolution of black people. Does J.H.U. care if black people love themselves and their heritage? Does J.H.U. care if they have self-pride? I would say no. I think that black people need to realize their self-worth and be proud of their blackness in order to develop a healthier, more positive society in the future. But why would J.H.U., a primarily affluent, Caucasian, scientific institution care? - Anonymous. (Response to the B.S.U. survey)

"And the Survey Says?"

Black Hopkins Students Speak Out.
by Clifton Williams

It seems as though too often this university prefers to ignore the interests of its black student population. For the last 25 years, black students at Hopkins have consistently expressed the importance of hiring more black professors. Their interests, however have so far not been taken into account. In the effort to find out how black students honestly felt about the hiring of more black professors, the Perspective conducted a survey of fifty-two black students on the Homewood campus.

The survey gave students a chance to respond to questions which, for as long as I can remember, they have never been given the opportunity to answer before. Some of the questions focused on fact finding, such as "have you ever been taught by a black professor while at Hopkins?" Quite obviously, most of the answers to this question were (No), since there are only "six black professors" at Johns Hopkins University: including Peabody, the School of Public Health, S.A.I.S. and the Medical School

according to Provost Cooper.

The question this particular article asks, goes as follows: 1) How can having a black professor assist your educational development as a black college student? It's about time this kind of question were asked of black Hopkins undergraduates. Questions such as these give the already marginalized black Hopkins student a voice; some kind of say in matters which concern them.

Based on the responses it seems that most black students believe a black professor is someone they can easily relate to, because of shared experiences. Mieka Gillette sums it up when she says, "I learn better from those from those I can relate to." Charles White Jr. tells why when he states, "Well, a black professor shares the same background and struggles that we have and can bring this to light through their teaching which we can relate to and it gives us hope and encouragement as well as helps us see how important it is to help other blacks and encourage them." According to White, having a black professor who is there, can help him be there for others.

Black professors can assist in the development of the black college student in several ways. A black professor can choose to

be a mentor for black college students. As Danielle Griffen attests, "Black teachers tend to look out for black students. It would be great to have a black professor who could not only teach, but mentor to black students." Black professors can also provide a different perspective in the classroom. Opal Taylor suggests, "It would allow me to see a different perspective. At this point I don't sense that my professors understand where I am coming from in terms of my understanding of the material presented to me and the structure in which it is taught." A black professor can create a climate which is more conducive and accepting of the black college student.

For most, however, a black professor stands as a symbol of success. Just by teaching here, black teachers affirm that success is possible for blacks in academia. L'tricia Oglesby agrees, "it would be an encouragement. To see a Black professor teaching at Johns Hopkins would allow me to see that success at the upper level is achievable." Kasandrah Baynes emphasizes this point even further when she asserts that, "not only black students would benefit from black professors, as it stands now, other groups have been represented before the entire university, I think that blacks should be recognized (not only for themselves), but also as a testimony of professionalism in the face of the university." By bringing more black professors to the university everyone can benefit.

The question now presents itself, why in the last 25 years are there only six black

professors at Johns Hopkins University? Well...as far as Philip D. Curtin, professor of history at Johns Hopkins University and foremost thinker in African History is concerned, bringing in more black professors to teach African History and "raiding" African universities for African scholars will ghettoize African history. As far as Dr. Curtin is concerned, there are too many black professors teaching African History. He suggests in his article in the March 1994 issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education:

"'the rising tide of cultural pluralism' has created demands from African-American students that courses in African history be tailored to meet the concerns of contemporary African Americans. Students also often demand that courses be taught by African Americans or when not many African-American candidates are available by Africans with whom students want to feel a common heritage. When these demands are put side by side with the laudable efforts by colleges and universities to increase the number of black faculty members the result is often the ghettoization of African history."-Philip D. Curtin

Why must hiring more black faculty lead to the ghettoization of African History? Does having all white professors in the Biology, or Chemistry department "ghettoize" science? It is obvious that there is a double-standard in Dr. Curtin's statement.

The professor's argument cannot be considered accurate when even the Dean of

Students at his own school, Dean Boswell considers the university's effort to bring more black professors to teach in any discipline for that matter, to be anything but 'laudable.' Having more black professors teaching about the struggles of their own people is not a bad thing, it's a good thing. Besides, I'm sure that if this university made an effort to hire more black professors to teach Organic Chemistry, or Introduction to American Politics; the black student population would not be so dissatisfied. Until that wonderful day comes, the black student "struggle" to bring more black professors to Hopkins will continue.

According to Provost Cooper and Dean Knapp, the department chairs are responsible for the hiring of new faculty. As you can clearly ascertain from this assertion, since there are twenty-five departments at Hopkins and equally as many department chairs, the responsibility of bringing more black faculty to Hopkins falls on too many shoulders.

Black Student Union files show that only in the aftermath of the 16 Points and the library incidents, did the university make a concerted effort to bring more black professors to the university. All of a sudden, four black P.h.d.'s were hired to teach. Only when put in a tight situation did the university budge and start making concessions.

In his interview with the Perspective, Dean Knapp was unable to make a clear commitment to the effort of bringing more black professors to Hopkins. He cited that finding black professors was a very difficult

process, and even when one was found the competition with other universities for these rare black professors was great. However, the Diversity Committee report submitted to President Richardson on March 4, 1995 states that when positions are offered "it is highly probable that the candidate will accept the Hopkins offer." Either this university has given a lackluster effort to bring more black professors here thus far, or someone doesn't have their facts straight.

Provost Cooper was also asked whether he would be willing to submit a formal written proposal to the Black Student Union about the universities' future intentions in hiring more black professors, as was done by Provost Armstrong in the aftermath of the 16 point incidents. In reply, the Provost gave his word, but did not go so far as to agree to the formal written proposal. According to Black Student Union documents the university's obligation for bring more black professors to Hopkins expires this year. And just recently, Provost Cooper quit from his post at Johns Hopkins. Now, all we have left is the word of an ex-Provost.

And the "struggle" continues and continues...

"nigger hell"

welcome to nigger hell
no, the skin does not
significantly lighten
as age increases; the hair
does not magically uncurl
or straighten no matter
the degree of assimilation.
and we are all black flames
dancing; weeping and gnashing
denying each other
the chance to escape
from nigger hell.

Carlos Raphael Greenlee

In the Course of a Day

(true story)

by Robert Johnson

Damn, 8:50 and I'm just waking up for my 9:00 class! No time to brush my teeth, got to put on yesterday's clothes and get the hell out of here. Now remember Robert, gray sweat pants, white tee shirt. No, not that one, look for the one with the words "IT'S NOT THE SHOES" written on the back. Here it is. Whew, doesn't smell too good. But oh well. Brush your hair Robert, don't forget to brush your hair. Oh yeah, and you might swish some Listerine through your mouth so you can talk to people.

Okay, let's go. Wait, get your keys. Shut the door behind you. Good, the elevator door's already open, hurry up, get yourself in. Oh great, a white girl, just me and a white girl. I feel so uncomfortable being alone in elevators with white women. Here we go, she's tightening her grip on her purse. Do I look like a thief? I didn't see one in the mirror this morning. Treat a person like a beast, he'll act like a beast. Why don't they realize that?

Good, this ride's over. I'll just forget it. What are you doing walking all slow, Robert? Get a move on. Look at your watch. Oh no, 9:00 already. Better start running. Damn,

what's that guy looking at me like that for. I guess he's never seen a black man run before. Forget it Robert, "ignorance is bliss," once said the great Emerson. That's right Robert, get in the learning mode. I feel good now. What's that Hop Cop want?

"What ya runnin' from boy?"

"You mean what am I running to. I'm late for class. Excuse me."

"Yeah okay boy. Let me see some I.D." I said to myself, no let me see your I.D.! Who the hell does this guy think he's talking to? Why isn't he asking the dozens of other people out here for their I.D.'s

"First of all, I'm not your boy, and you don't need to see my I.D. Now get out of my way, I'm late for class."

"You're not going anywhere until I see some I.D."

"Why don't you hassle the white kid over there running? Look, forget it. Here's my I.D. Can I go now?"

"Don't get sassy with me young man. Now, you stay out of trouble." Tell your mother! Damn bigot! Wish they'd all just go away.

That's it. Not even an apology. I feel like a dog or something. Treat a person like a beast,

he'll act like a beast. Mama always used to say, 'you gotta get used to white people treating you like an inferior if you want to make it in society.' She's right about them treating us like we're inferior, but this is the nineties and I ain't gotta take nothin' save for the color of my skin and the word of my Lord. It's 9:10 and I'm still not in class yet. Damn, gotta get a move on!

Oh boy, another group of white people talking about the O.J.Simpson verdict. My God. They act like they witnessed him murder her. Oh yeah right!, there is no justice. Why do they keep saying that? How could the jury have convicted him based on the mixed evidence given? Mark Furman said he'd do anything to set up a black person. And come on, the damn glove didn't even fit! I didn't see a bunch of white people holding candlelight vigils when those cops got off for beating the hell out of Rodney King. No cries of a justiceless America from white people then. And what about the white cop that shot an 18 year old black man in the back and got demoted to desk duty for it. I didn't see any of them crying in the streets then. No peace marches to bring an end to the Ku Klux Klan. And no passionate cries of injustice all of the other times a white person killed a black person and got away with it. But no, let a black man be suspected of killing a white woman and all hell breaks loose. It's so sickening.

Forget it Robert, you're here for one purpose: to get an education. I just hope I don't

have any racist teachers! Probably do though. Wow, what a way to wake up.

Finally I'm in class. I'm fifteen minutes late but that's O.K. I'll just take this seat by the door so I won't be noticed. Should I speak to the girl next to me? Too late, she's already going to another seat. Now, I didn't do a damn thing to that white girl! I should just call her ass out right now! That pisses me off! Why do they act like we don't belong here, they brought us here. I feel like just going mad and hurting somebody! Forget about it Robert. Nothing's ever going to change. Treat a person like a beast, he'll act like a beast!

Remembering the "Struggle"

A conversation with Hopkins Alumni Kobi Little

Kobi- You probably will get different stories. I thought there were some serious problems at this university. I wasn't a student here but I was still active in community. The black men on campus had a meeting. This meeting was a response to an article Stephanie wrote in the Perspective about how the brothers were not carrying their load. And she was right. At the Men's Meeting, we all sat down and addressed the issues presented in the article and after we came to the conclusion that we, as black men were going to organize ourselves.

In April when the elections came around we named Mike Straker as Vice President and

Henry Boatang as President. And we won. At the same time we had been talking late at night about different issues so we wrote down a list of all of our problems about what we didn't like about what was going on at Hopkins.

When Bill Richardson first came to Hopkins he said that he was going to deal with everyone's concerns from the black community to the gay community, to the Catholics; whoever had a concern about anything. This was my freshmen year. So we filed in there and gave him our concerns and basically, he said he was going to handle it. We never heard from him. We sat down and drafted a letter and said 'dear President it's been two years (spring '92) since you've been here and we haven't heard anything from you. And we haven't heard about issues we put to your attention.'

And he sent a letter back and we weren't satisfied with what he had to say. So we had a committee and made a list of thirteen points; it became sixteen points only after the university played a lot of games with us and we realized that it was necessary for us to put in three additional points in order to ensure the university's accountability. The "Sixteen Points" was a startingboard in discussing our concerns about a multitude of issues across student life.

However, the administration wouldn't respond to our intellectual arguments. I don't care how many letters we wrote, how many meetings we had. They didn't take one bit of action until the library incident. The university refused to redo its Black History month display

of white abolitionists who had formerly owned slaves. We went in that library and had a sit-in. Nothing was done, however until I said 'you either open this case and take this case down, or else.' That was Sunday, February 28 1995. By that Friday there was a meeting of every top brass. We met in the Clipper Room. Now we heard stuff like "O.K. what can we do!" from the administration. -Laughter- Instantly, the outdoor athletic facility became no problem.

The only difference between what happened here and what happened at Rutgers is that we didn't publicize it. This was five steps from us carrying guns to campus. The only reason we considered being armed was the constant threat to our livelihood. Constant harassment from police officers and fellow students.

Things weren't always as oppressive as they got from the start. As long as we were smiling happy go lucky niggers then everything was cool. But the second we got serious. The second we started really talking about the issues then things got a hell of a lot more oppressive.

They did all kinds of stuff to us. Look at this B.S.U. room. We didn't have computers, bookshelves. The walls were cracked and peeled up. Every year there was flooding. That computer needs a tune up. We need another phone line. E-mail.

We were brought into the dean's office and threatened with punitive action. Constantly threatened by police. Harassed in class by professors. Travis's mail was opened. You name it. It was a pretty rough time for us. One of the things we were doing while we were doing this is

that we were educating ourselves. We had study groups and we were reading books about African History about Civil Rights about Black power, we were reading about movement to get Black Studies Departments. It was a period of time when there was a tremendous coming together, coalescing. The Brotherhood, the sisterhood. People were willing to put themselves on the line for each other.

One of the biggest mistakes we made was that no matter how radical we became still somewhere in the back of our mind we had the romantic idea that if we just told these white people that 'you were doing us wrong!,' they would fix it. The whole time we never called the national press. We never called the N.A.A.C.P. If we had just told them! If we wrote a letter to the N.A.A.C.P. saying we had a problem at Hopkins. We didn't even get in contact with the local community. And that's one of the hardest things that you all encounter as Hopkins students and you're right in the middle of Black everything.

Perspective- Was it worth it?

Kobi- Was it worth it? Hell Yeah! Absolutely! Things have changed. As bad as they or may not be they're better than they were. It was worth it for the personal and educational experience we gained. We transformed this community. The problem is that the university is a transient environment so people leave and then you have people come in and bring the same old stuff. The objective conditions that warranted the 16

points that warrant our organizing ourselves and launching an effective campaign are still there. But they might be covered up, they might be flowered over. Someone might have spread some old air freshener so you can't really smell how bad it stinks here. But if you scratch the surface?

Edited by Clifton Williams.

For my people at Hopkins who have, for the last twenty five years given their youth to the "struggle" and continue to pay the price.



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The Black Student Union's

Perspective

November 1995



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